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ABSTRACT

Despite over 30 years of work by the Migrant Education Program (MEP), rural migrant students may still be the most disadvantaged student population in the nation. Migrant youth problems include constant adjustment to a new environment, cultural differences, and lack of language skills. In defining these problems, this report looks at a typical school, the demography of migrant workers, the needs of migrant students (educational, behavioral, eligibility for federal programs), and school completion rates. A brief history is given of the authorization and structure of the MEP, as well as a description of its services: identification and recruitment, support services, home-school liaison, health services, parental involvement, summer programs, early childhood services, credit accrual and alternative programs for secondary students, college assistance, and student records technology. A case is made for use of the MEP as a model to achieve equity in urban districts. Relevant elements include understanding the customers, training staff to have high expectations, contacting families each year, providing brokerage services to families, developing coordinated early childhood services, using the Even Start model, advocating within the school, tracking student mobility, using flexible scheduling, providing summer school, retrieving students, and involving parents. The goals of the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) are discussed in reference to serving migrant students and coordinating MEP and Title I services and funding. Challenges for the future are outlined: conflicts associated with IASA and Title I; anti-immigrant attitudes; funding problems; coordination at national, state, and local levels; involvement of employers and state governments; and political advocacy. (SAS)

Migrant Education

Thirty Years of Success, but Challenges Remain

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Preface

John D. Perry, executive director of the Interstate Migrant Education Council (IMEC), has made a significant contribution to the understanding of the Migrant Education Program (MEP).

In concise and lucid terms, Mr. Perry traces the history of migrant education, chronicles its many successes and achievements, and raises warning flags for the future of this important program.

Moreover, Mr. Perry demonstrates how it is possible for MEP to serve as a model for equity by presenting an outline of the elements that exist in migrant education that could serve to enhance educational achievement for all students.

Coordination, cooperation, and collaboration issues which are essential aspects of the Improving America's Schools Act are also addressed by Mr. Perry and add an important dimension to his logical and sequential analysis.

All in all, "Migrant Education: Thirty Years of Success, but Challenges Remain," is essential reading for educators who strive to guarantee equity for all children, who seek to find ways to assure linkages among federal programs, and whose minds and hearts are committed to the creed, "all children can learn."

The New England Desegregation Assistance Center, a program of the Education Alliance for Equity and Excellence in the Nation's Schools, is pleased to publish through the Education Alliance Press, this important addition to the growing body of literature on educational equity.

John Correiro
Director
New England Desegregation Assistance Center
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Foreword

In the article, "Migrant Education: Thirty Years of Success, But Challenges Remain", John Perry traces the efforts of the Migrant Education Program (MEP) to meet the unique needs of migrant students.

Rural migrant students may be the most disadvantaged student population in the nation. They have problems that are similar to students from families with low income, however, they also have problems related to the lifestyle of traveling with their families as they seek employment. Mobility makes it difficult to have continuity in their education. MEP addresses a significant need because schools are not organized for mobile students.

MEP programs are excellent models for education reform. If similar programs were applied to the general population, much greater progress could be made in reaching the national education goals.

The enactment, in 1994, of the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), provides a dual opportunity. The linkages, required by IASA should help expand services for migrant students. Title I programs can gain from the linkages by using MEP strategies. Coordination between Title I and MEP may be difficult due to their historical differences. State and local education leadership should oversee the coordination to ensure IASA goals are met for all students.

MEP faces several challenges in the future. Anti-immigrant feelings and the reduction in discretionary federal spending to obtain a balanced budget could put MEP in jeopardy. In addition to these political problems, a need exists to coordinate MEP with other migrant family service programs, state agencies and employers of migrant workers.

To meet these challenges will require national and regional organizations to raise awareness of the continued need for MEP and to facilitate coordination efforts.

The Lifestyle and Circumstances of Migrant Families

The Migrant Education Program (MEP) celebrated its thirtieth anniversary on November 3, 1996. Through its three decades, MEP has developed services to promote educational equity for migrant students. To understand the strategies used by MEP, it is necessary to know the lifestyle and circumstances of migrant families, the obstacles for migrant students in obtaining the full spectrum of services offered by schools and the demographics of the population.

Migrant Families Are Different

The adult members of migrant families seldom have advanced skills and therefore enter into the unskilled agricultural labor market to sustain themselves. Work and economic necessity are primary factors in family decision-making. Each year the families seek employment in an uncertain labor market that is affected by local weather conditions and world wide supply of products. The family must determine the week of harvest for several different crops. Then they must estimate their probable income and weigh it against the costs of travel, housing, food, characteristics of employers and the availability of services for children.[1]

Migrant workers likely have a residence in a school district, but work part of the year away from their home, often in other states. Travel during the year can be in the thousands of miles. Their children may leave school in the spring, enter another school for the final months of the year, be in another school in the fall and then return home, again changing schools. It is possible that weeks of school are missed. Even if time in school is not lost, the continuity of the student's education is disrupted.

Problems For Migrant Youth

For the migrant children, everything is an adjustment. They are in new schools, with different teachers, different textbooks and they must seek new friends. Frequently, teachers have low academic expectations of them. Due to language and cultural differences, their peers may be reluctant to accept them or there may be outright harassment.

Language skills may be an acute problem. Over 75 percent of migrants are Hispanic.[2] Over 90 percent primarily speak a language other than English and 84 percent speak limited English or none at all.[3] In 1990, less than 40 percent of

migrant students were judged to have oral skills adequate for functioning in a classroom.[4] Language is both an academic barrier for students and a social barrier for parents in dealing with schools.

When the families are harvesting crops, they could be living in labor camps isolated from the main stream of community activities. Housing can range from marginal to appalling. Living conditions can create tremendous stress. The workday is long and tedious. Children are expected to provide some of the family needs either by working, babysitting or housekeeping. Many teenagers, for a variety of reasons, marry at a young age and have children themselves.[5]

Health insurance, even Medicaid, is usually not available for migrant workers. Evidence cited by the National Commission on Migrant Education, indicates that the health of the migrant population is similar to third world conditions. The Migrant Clinicians Network states that migrant children have an incidence of various diseases at a higher level than the U.S. population.[6] A GAO study concludes that migrant farm workers are not adequately protected by federal laws and regulations.[7] The National Commission found that migrant children were especially vulnerable to malnutrition, dental problems, low birth rates, high infant mortality and developmental abnormalities.[8]

Schools are considered institutions of authority by most migrant parents.[9] The migrant families believe the school knows what is best for their children and they are reluctant to challenge school decisions. If the parents do not speak English well they are at a disadvantage in working with teachers and the school. Due to long work days and travel distances it is often impossible for parents to visit schools. Involving parents to directly support their child's education is very difficult.

The Typical School

Not all migrant children fit neatly into this description, but the essence of rural farm worker migration and lifestyle creates elements of these circumstances for virtually all of the students eligible for services by MEP. The reality is that schools are not organized to meet the needs of migrant students. Assumptions schools make and expectations schools have do not apply to migrant students and parents.

The typical elementary and secondary school in the United States is organized for a stable population of resident students. It is assumed students will enroll in the fall and be in attendance for the full year and that most of the students will continue in the school during the succeeding year. The curriculum is sequential from fall to spring. Records of student progress and problems are easily available to teachers

and guidance counselors.

Schools expect parents to be aware of the progress of their child and the school's activities. They expect parents will be available when officials wish to contact them about problems concerning their child. They also expect that basic health needs of students will be provided by parents.

It is assumed that parents will be part of the community and interact with other parents through churches or other community groups. Schools expect that some of the parents, on a voluntary basis, will be greatly involved in school activities and serve on various communities.

There clearly is a gap between schools and their expectations, and the day to day existence of migrant families. MEP serves to bridge that gap.

Demographics

There are three broad streams of migration that go from south to north in the east, central, and eastern parts of the United States. There are numerous exceptions to this general pattern as families move from Arizona to southern California, Texas to Florida, other east-west and west-east moves and various combinations. From a school district perspective it is helpful to think of "sending schools" and "receiving schools." Sending schools are the home base. Receiving schools are those where a migrant student is in residence temporarily. The South is generally a sending area and the North is generally a receiving area although there are many exceptions to this generality too.

The number of eligible migrant students was estimated to be 597,000 in 1990.[10] For 1996-1997, three states, California, Texas and Florida, have 53 percent of the nation's full time equivalent students (FTEs). Washington, Oregon, Michigan, Alaska and Arizona account for approximately 15 percent of the FTEs. The remaining 32 percent of FTEs are scattered among the other states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia.[11]

Although there is a concentration of migrant students in certain states, MEP eligible students are identified in all states except Hawaii. Migrant students are truly students of the nation. The availability of services in receiving schools and states that have a relatively small number of FTEs are essential if migrant students are to receive a full year of education.

Studies indicate that the lifestyle circumstances of rural migrants will continue, the number of migrant families will increase and the legacy of their lifestyle will persist

when families settle-out. The National Commission on Migrant Education predicts the need for farm labor in the United States will remain great and even increase.[12] A Research Triangle study estimates the number of migrant students will increase 32 percent from 1990 to 790,000 in 2000.[13] The National Commission estimates a 5 to 10 percent change in the pool of migrant workers each year with the newer migrants having lower educational levels than in the past.[14] As migrants leave farm work, it is reasonable to assume they will not return to the economically depressed areas of their home base, but rather they will settle out in those areas where there is greater economic opportunity. This pattern suggests that families who have experienced adversity due to migration will be in communities throughout the United States. The children, who have had their education periodically interrupted and faced the unique challenges of a migrant student, will, in all likelihood, continue to be adversely educationally affected after they settle-out.

Needs of Migrant Students

The examination of the lifestyle and circumstances of migrant families leads to the conclusion that children of these families will have greater educational needs than the norm. It is inevitable that students with language barriers and health problems, who also have high mobility, will have academic difficulties.

Multiple Needs

In 1992, Research Triangle Institute (RTI) completed "Descriptive Study of Chapter 1 Migrant Education Program." One part of the study used eight indicators of student needs. The results indicate migrant students have multiple needs. The vast majority, 82 percent, exhibited two needs, 60 percent had three needs, 45 percent had four needs and 32 percent had five or more needs.[15]

Table I

Estimated Percent of K-12 Migrant Students Who Moved in Last Twelve Months By Various "Needs" Categories[16]

Eligible for Free or Reduced Meals	90%	Below 35 Percentile - Mathematics	39%
Eligible for Title 1	53%	Behind Grade Level	38%
Below 35 Percentile - Reading	50%	Severe Behavioral Problems	8%
Below 35 Percentile - Other Language Arts	47%	Higher Absentee Rate	5%

Table I indicates the families of most migrant students are poor. Eighty-nine percent are eligible for free or reduced price lunch. Over 50 percent of migrant students are eligible for regular Title I which is targeted to schools with low income families.[17] Seasonal agricultural workers, of which migrants are a sub-set, have an annual income of $5,000.[18]

Delayed enrollment, high absenteeism and behavioral problems are common among migrant students. The case studies used in the RTI study indicate that migration to areas to harvest summer crops result in late enrollment in school. Dates on late enrollment for individual students corroborate the case studies. Over 50 percent of the most currently migratory students enrolled late, with 38 percent enrolling thirty days late.[19] Over 4 percent of migrant students are absent more than 25 percent of the year and about 6 percent exhibit severe behavioral problems.[20]

As a consequence of these factors, academic achievement among migrant students is low. The percent of migrant students who are estimated to be below the 35th percentile in achievement level is approximately 50 percent in reading, 46 percent in language arts and 39 percent in mathematics.[21]

A very high rate of migrant students were one or more grade levels behind their peers. For students who moved within the last twelve months the retention rate was 37 percent. For those who move within the last twenty-four months, the rate was 39 percent while it was 51 percent for those who have moved within the last thirty-six months.[22]

The Grade Retention and Placement Evaluation Project (GRAPE) examined migrant student retention by grade level. In kindergarten, 35 percent of migrant students were one or more years older that their classmates as compared to 5 percent of the general population. At the second grade level 49 percent of migrant students were a grade below the grade level of their age group compared to 21 percent of the general population. After second grade, migrant students below grade level was about 25 percent higher than the general population. GRAPE determined that 65 percent of migrant students below grade level were retained in kindergarten or first grade.[23]

School Completion Rates

An accurate determination of dropout rates for migrants would be a valuable indicator of overall educational need. Unfortunately, accuracy in dropout rates for the general population has been difficult to achieve and rates from two or three decades ago are suspect. For migrant students, it is even more difficult to determine

dropout rates because of the changing mix of the population.

The indicators of educational need combined with the unique lifestyle of migrant work suggest it could be very difficult for a migrant student to graduate from high school. This hypothesis is sustained by two studies. In 1975, it was estimated that 90 percent of migrant students did not complete high school,[24] while a 1987 study estimated the migrant dropout rate at 45 percent.[25]

Both of these percentages seem plausible. In the early years of MEP, it was primarily an elementary school program. If students got to the secondary level they had difficulty accruing credit due to limited attendance and difficulty in transferring both partial credit and full credit among schools. The different graduation requirements of states is another obstacle in getting a high school diploma. These factors help explain a 90 percent dropout rate in the 1970s.

In the late 1970's migrant educators began focusing on secondary programs and problems of the transferring of secondary credits. In 1981, a national policy seminar was held on this topic to raise awareness of the issues and develop recommendations. The United States Department of Education funded specific projects to address the issues. These efforts, along with the national attention given to high school completion rates during the 1980's made a reduction to a 45 percent student dropout rate reasonable. Even though there may have been a dramatic improvement in high school completion rates, a dropout rate of 45 percent is still too high and requires continued attention.

Each year migrant educators know they must provide services to a population that has multiple and complex needs at every grade level. From its modest beginnings, in 1966, MEP has developed state-by-state programs which are designed to meet both the general needs of migrant students and the particular circumstances of the students in each state.

Migrant Education Programs

Authorization of the Migrant Education Program

In 1964, the United States Office of Education funded a task force on the education of migrant students. The task force concluded that special efforts were necessary to serve the unique needs of this population. They recommended that a program for this purpose should be interstate in nature because of the mobility of migrant families.[26]

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed in 1965 as part of President Johnson's War on Poverty. It was assumed that Title I of ESEA, that was targeted to schools having a high incidence of poverty, would be the program that served migrant students. Congress quickly concluded that this was not the case. Most Title I funds were going to urban districts while migrant students were attending rural schools. In 1966, ESEA was amended to authorize the Migrant Education Program (MEP).[27]

Under the authorization states were to receive funds to serve migrant students based on the number of students in their state. Funding was originally based on Department of Labor farm labor statistics. After 1973, funding was based on the actual count of full time equivalent (FTEs) of migrant students. An eligible migrant student is one whose family has moved across school district lines for the purpose of seeking employment in agricultural, fishing, lumbering, dairy farming or food processing.

Poverty was not a criteria for eligibility for migrant students, such as it is for the Title I program. Instead, eligibility was determined by mobility and family occupation.

Migrant students were to receive regular school services and Title I services if they qualified and if the services were available in the schools. MEP was to serve students, on a supplemental basis, when they were not receiving other services. In Title I schools, MEP was to be a supplement to Title I.

Structure of The Migrant Education Program

MEP is a federally funded program that is administered by states that apply and receive grants. Forty-nine states (the exception is Hawaii), the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico receive grants. States can give subcontracts within their state to local education agencies and other entities to provide direct services.

Services in a state are detailed in an annual plan that is developed by the state education agency (SEA). In practice, the SEAs and grantees work together to develop the plan. The annual plan process and the state determination of annual need of migrant students permits a state to change services on a year-to-year basis that reflect the changing demographics of the migrant labor force and the assessed needs of students.

The use of migrant education funds is very flexible. SEAs may pay for programs during the summer, after school and on weekends and for counselors, teacher aids, medical and dental programs, parental involvement, transportation and clothing.

During 1995 and 1996, Congress debated the proper role of the federal govern-

ment in education and examined how the federal education expenditures could provide the best services. MEP seems to offer a perfect model. Through MEP there is a provision of federal funds with federal oversight, but there is also a great amount of flexibility given to the states. Federal funding is provided because migrant students are deemed a responsibility of the nation. Federal regulations are minimal and there is wide latitude in the use of funds. States, in cooperation with local providers, determine on an annual basis the needs of students and the best use of funds.

High Expectations

Migrant educators have high expectations for migrant students. This statement is not based on research, but rather on personal observations. In the twenty years I have been associated with migrant education, I have never heard a disparaging comment about a migrant student or their family from any person in migrant education. Compared to my other educational experiences, in high school and college teaching, the attitude of migrant educators is truly remarkable and unusual.

My theory on the reasons for this positive attitude of migrant educators toward their students is that many of them have a shared experience with the students. Many of the staff are former migrants including several of the state directors of migrant education. A large number of migrant educators are Hispanic. The empathy exhibited by the program personnel tends to attract other educators who believe "all children can learn," to use the recent phrase that connotes high expectations. All the personnel admire the work ethic of the migrant families.

The core belief of migrant educators is that if a child is not academically successful the lack of success can be attributed to the child's circumstances. As a consequence of this belief, migrant educators try to build programs that meet the needs of migrant students rather than expecting the students to fit into a program that is rigidly constructed to primarily meet the needs of a school.

Unique Needs - Unique Programs

Each of the programs will be discussed in some detail, but it is helpful to see a list to understand the scope of MEP.

- **Identification and Recruitment**
  Each migrant family is contacted each year to determine the eligibility and needs.

- **Assessment**
  Each year students are assessed to determine if the regular school program is sufficient or supplemental services are needed.

- **Support Services**
  Services other than educational services are provided based on need.

- **Home School Liaison**
  Periodic contacts between staff and family are made.

- **Referral Services**
  The staff help families obtain non-educational services.

- **Health**
  Health assessments, vouchers and emergency care are provided in coordination with community providers.

- **Parental Involvement**
  There are state and local parent advisory councils.

- **Parent Partnerships**
  Parents are trained to be an education resource and advocate for their children.

- **Flexibility**
  Programs are offered in the summer, after school and on weekends.

- **Early Childhood**
  Funding is received for children ages three and four.

- **Credit Exchange**
  National programs to obtain, accrue and transfer credit have been developed.

- **Retrieval**
  A high school equivalency program has been developed specifically for migrant students.

- **College**
  College programs have been developed to provide supplemental support and encourage entrance into teaching.

- **Technology**
  Migrant educators have been in the vanguard in using technology to transfer

student records and develop programs.

Annual Identification of Students

A state's funds from the federal government for migrant education is determined by the number of full time equivalent students (FTEs) during the previous year. The funding formula is more complex than this general statement, but the central feature of the formula is the state receives funds on the basis of its annual successful identification of students. If a state has ten percent of the national FTEs, it receives approximately ten percent of the funds Congress appropriates for MEP. If in a succeeding year a state has only eight percent of the national FTEs, its grant will drop proportionally.

The funding formula puts pressures on states to identify students, especially in recent years when Congress has level-funded the program. States are in competition with each other and states with relatively small migrant populations are at a particular disadvantage if large migrant states such as California, Texas, and Florida significantly increase the number of students they identify. The funding formula creates a market system with an incentive to keep aggressively seeking to find migrant students.

The identification of students places a tremendous burden on states, but migrant educators do not oppose the formula requirements because they recognize the salutary effects on the program. In fact, in the last reauthorization of MEP, when a change in the identification requirement was suggested, as a means to save money, the proposed change received no support. Migrant educators believe recruitment is essential for them to understand the location and needs of migrant students in their state. It also brings MEP directly in contact with parents.

States use MEP funds to hire the recruiters who may work part-time or seasonally, and need not be professional educators. It can be a very interesting job for retired teachers or persons preparing to teach. Although the pay is usually not very high, recruiters are given respect in the program because they are recognized as the life blood of MEP both fiscally and programmatically. Without recruiters there would be no MEP!

The primary qualification of a recruiter is to have an understanding of migrant families and students and an empathy for their needs. They must be able to go to traditional locations, such as school and health centers, to find migrant students, but they also have to engage in non-traditional activities, such as visiting farm labor camps or hanging around villages where migrant families might shop. In these

circumstances they may meet hostile employers who do not want the government interfering with their employer-employee relationship or fearful parents who might consider them agents of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. These encounters can be very intimidating.

The effort of recruitment is well worth the expenditures of time and resources and the difficulties involved. The educational and programmatic benefits are enormous. The recruiter brings good tidings to the family and a welcome to the school and community. They provide information on MEP and other services. They open a relationship between the school and home which can later ensure proper health services, attention to special family needs, home-schooling and a variety of other important person-to-person contacts. Knowledge of an individual family's circumstances can lead to proper educational assessment and an understanding of trends in migration.

The MEP recruitment programs bring the school to the family and provide an indication of the school's willingness to serve the family and children. This first stage of the migrant education process creates an atmosphere that the parents and children are of prime importance and that programs are in existence to serve them.

Support Services

Once a student has been identified as migrant eligible, the next critical step is a proper assessment of individual needs. The Migrant Education Program is a supplemental program, therefore all the existing school programs should be available to migrant students. It is possible a migrant student will not require any special services. If compensatory services are needed and the school offers compensatory services, a migrant student might receive services through Title I and/or bilingual education. To obtain appropriate services for migrant students from the school, requires close cooperation between the MEP and regular counselors and teachers. MEP personnel obtain information from diagnostic testing, interviews with parents and review of school records from schools previously attended by the student. They then act as advocates for the students.

Beyond the school's regular and supplementary services, MEP provides a host of additional support services. These services demonstrate the uniqueness of MEP in meeting individual needs of students. They include health services of medical and dental screening, specialized transportation for services when regular schools are not in session, home visits and individual and group counseling and tutorial services. For instructional services, extra teacher aids might be provided in classrooms with migrant students, pull-out sessions or after school, evening or weekend tutorial

sessions.

Building a relationship between the family and school is a main ingredient of MEP. The process starts with contact by the recruiter and is sustained by home-school liaison personnel. Home visits are for school related matters, but the liaison is also available to help the family obtain other services in the community to aid in referrals to other agencies for specific problems. Many of the programs prepare brochures for parents detailing information about the community, act as brokers for the family with other agencies and even solicit and distribute donations of food, clothing and other necessities. These distributions can be almost life-saving in times of bad weather or if other factors limit work for the family while they are in a particular location.

Health services vary depending on the community. Health screenings and nutritional services are usually provided directly by MEP. In emergency situations, MEP provides vouchers for purchase of health services. MEP often contacts local physicians or medical schools to provide services at a reduced rate. MEP helps in referrals to migrant health centers, community health centers and other providers of health services.

Parental Involvement

Parental Involvement is an integral part of MEP. Migrant educators understand that parents are the one constant in the ever changing life of migrant students and they work with parents as equal partners in the education process. Forty-eight states have statewide parent advisory councils and 96 percent of local projects have a parent advisory committee.[28] Advisory committees are active during the regular school year and for summer projects. The councils and committees are means to provide parents information about MEP, the general school programs and a means, on the local level, of training parents to train other parents in techniques of guiding their children in reading and other homework.

Parents review and provide input into state MEP plans and local programs. They attend meetings with staff to share ideas and participate in staff development activities. On a less formal basis, MEP holds open houses at schools, group dinners and fundraising events to socially involve parents and make them feel comfortable in schools.

The accomplishments of MEP parental involvement are extraordinary considering the cultural attitude of many Hispanic parents to defer to school authorities, the lack of high levels of formal education among most migrant parents, the extended workday of parents, transportation difficulties and lack of English proficiency of

many parents. The efforts in parental involvement demonstrate another aspect of the respect migrant educators have for migrant families.

An example of an evolving aspect of parental involvement is New York state's Home Literacy Program. This program and similar programs in other states are modeled after the Even Start program that was designed by Congressman William Goodling of Pennsylvania. In the New York program, staff make visits to the home to teach literacy to parents, help parents read to children and essentially empower parents to be their child's educational resource at home and advocates at school.[29] These programs are developing parental involvement beyond the political roles of committees by having parents be actively involved in their child's education.

Summer Programs

Summer school programs are also a key element in MEP, especially in northern receiving states when the summer is the time the largest number of migrant families are present. Summer programs in these areas tend to be migrant-only programs, run by MEP, rather than supplemental programs. Summer programs are particularly valuable to maintain a continuity of educational services between academic years and to provide opportunities for remediation. The programs provide an array of services including programs for pre-schoolers, 18 to 21 year olds, night and weekend programs, home-liaison programs and parental involvement activities.

Early Childhood Services

In the reauthorization of ESEA in 1988, the eligibility for counting migrant students was expanding from ages 5 through 17 to ages 3 through 21. Since that time there has been a greater emphasis on pre-school programs. MEP was permitted to provide pre-school services prior to 1988, but the students did not count toward the state's FTE's. A difficulty for MEP in providing preschool services during the regular year is the cost of the program. If there is no regular school pre-school programs, MEP must pay the total cost of services which is several times the cost of supplemental services. Migrant Head Start (MHS), operated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service, is an important provider of services in some areas, but, in 1986, MHS only served 6 percent of the eligible population.[30] Migrant Even Start (MES) funds are available on a limited competitive grant basis. MES serves children ages one through seven and provides literacy training for their parents.

Older Migrant Students

There is an acute awareness among migrant educators of the extraordinary difficul-

ties migrant students have in completing secondary school. The probability of dropping out of school is increased by falling behind in early grades, losing days of attendance because of travel, lack of continuity of instruction from school to school, the difficulty of accruing secondary credit for limited attendance in schools, lack of compatibly among state course offerings at secondary grade levels, difficult testing and graduation requirements among states and the various social and family pressures that entice students to work full-time rather than complete school. Under these circumstances it is a wonder that any migrant student graduates from high school if their family has worked in seasonal migrant farm labor throughout their school years.

To overcome these challenges and obstacles, MEP has a variety of programs which begin in the middle school years. The most common technique is extra instructional services after school and on weekends. There are tutorial sessions, homework centers, and instruction in study skills and test taking. Parents are targeted through parental involvement programs. The value of high school graduation and daily attendance is emphasized. Parents and students participate in counseling sessions on graduation requirements and ways to follow-up on the transfer of credit. Another activity that has become common is summer leadership programs, often co-sponsored with Job Training Partnership programs. In these programs secondary students attend high school classes on college campuses during the summer and receive a stipend.

In 1978, the Portable Assisted Study Sequence (PASS) was started in California. It provides courses for middle and high school students using independent study. Course credit is issued through the home-based school or the school where the student graduates. PASS has spread through out the nation with the support of MEP funds.

Since 1981, MEP has focused on the problems of credit exchange. In that year, a national policy forum was sponsored which brought together migrant educators and regular educators to develop linkages between schools and states for the purpose of transferring credit. The Office of Migrant Education has funded the National Secondary Credit Exchange Project to continue work in this area.

The High School Equivalency Program (HEP) was created as a retrieval program designed to provide campus based services to obtain a GED. There are seventeen HEPs that are specifically oriented for migrant students who have not completed high school. In 1991, HEP served 3000 students.[31]

The College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) is located on seven four year

college campuses. CAMP helps broker financial aid, gives small stipends and provides services that include counseling and remediation for freshman students. In 1991 there were approximately 300 college students receiving services from CAMP sites.[32]

The Mini-Corps is another program for migrant college students. It is a replica of a California state program. Although it was authorized by Congress in 1992, it has yet to receive any appropriation. The purpose of Mini-Corps is to encourage students to major in education by providing them stipends to work as teacher aids in MEP.

Use of Technology

One of the most ambitious efforts of migrant educators has been to develop a nationwide computer system, Migrant Student Records Transfer System (MSRTS), to register eligible migrant students, transfer records of students between schools, and provide management resource information for the state programs. Migrant educators should be credited for the foresight in using technology to tackle the enormous task of systematizing and transferring records. MSRTS was established in the early 1970's and over the next two decades went through several stages of growth.

With all its successes, MSRTS had serious problems. The input of data from states and local projects was uneven. The time lag between requests for information from the mainframe computer in Little Rock, Arkansas, and the return mail of records to local sites discouraged the use of MSRTS and diminished the desire of many projects to input data. Congress became concerned with the cost of MSRTS, its failure to rapidly transfer data, the lack of up-to-date information and the evidence of large numbers of schools not using the system. Congress eliminated funding for MSRTS in 1994, but states are still required to transfer student records. Migrant educators are now working to develop new systems to electronically transfer records.

MEP As A Model To Achieve Equity

Although not every aspect of MEP may be totally adaptable for other students, there are elements in every migrant education program that could enhance equity. If MEP were used as a model in cities, a giant step could be made to increase achievement and improve high school completion rates by providing opportunities for all students to obtain their full learning potential.

How this is accomplished in individual schools or districts would depend on individual circumstances, but here is a guide of what might be done.

- **Understand the customers**
  To start this process, one might answer these questions: Where do the families live? What is their income? What type of work do they do? What is their ethnic composition? What are unique features of their culture? What are their housing conditions? What health services do they need?

- **High expectations by staff**
  Train the staff in knowledge of the lifestyle and circumstances of the students. Recruit professional staff who are empathetic toward the families. Hire non-degree staff from the community. Train community members to become staff members.

- **Contact the families each year**
  Use the MEP recruitment techniques to meet the families before every school year. Use non-degree staff and persons from the community when possible.

- **Provide brokerage services to families**
  Let families know the school personnel will aid them in identifying and contacting other services agencies.

- **Early Childhood Services**
  Develop coordinated systems of all providers of early childhood services and make school sponsored services a priority in the school's budget to fill gaps in services.

- **Even Start**
  Use the Even Start model to provide early childhood services and adult literacy training.

- **Advocates within the school**
  Develop a case manager system that is a supplement to guidance counselors to help students through the education bureaucracy.

- **Be cognizant of student mobility**
  Develop a system to track students records for incoming and outgoing students.

- **Flexibility of schedules**
  Meet the needs of students and families by having the school open at night and on weekends.

- **Summer School**
  Provide services in the summer to maintain educational continuity.

- **Retrieval of Students**
  Make it the school's responsibility to seek out students who have left school. Develop programs in alternative settings that are flexible to meet the schedules of students.

- **Parental Involvement**
  Actively seek parents on a sustained basis to be involved with their child and to be an educational resource and advocate for their child. Make this effort a responsibility of the school and staff as well as parents. Do not give up if parents do not immediately participate. Consider the difficulties and apprehensions that parents might have to participate.

Improving America's School Act

Goals of IASA

Congress, with the passage of The Improving America's School Act (IASA), in 1994, intended that students eligible for Title I services would have programs equal to programs in schools for the general population. MEP is a part of Title I, therefore all of the stipulations in the law for Title I apply to MEP.

The key concept in IASA is that programs will be aligned with the regular school in curriculum and instruction, professional development, school leadership, accountability and school improvement. It is expected that Title I students will be treated the same as regular students. There will be high expectations for all students and they will meet high, challenging state standards with assessments to test the high standards.[33]

To achieve equality, a major thrust of the law is to require coordination of all services of IASA to be coordinated with each other. A primary means of coordination is to expand schoolwide projects, where all IASA funds can be combined with each other and with state and local funds in schools in which 50 percent of the students, in 1996-1997, meet poverty-income guidelines. This will mean an increase in schoolwide projects because prior to IASA, 75 percent of the students had to meet poverty guidelines.

The intent of the new law, in regard to migrant students, is to have their individual and group needs first met through the state consolidated plan and the local planning process for schoolwide projects. This may be possible, but it is unlikely to occur in the short-term. Successful coordination between Title I and MEP will probably be uneven within a state and among states.

The history of Title I and MEP is one of thirty years of two distinct programs traveling on a somewhat parallel path. If there has been jealously, fear and antagonism between personnel in the programs it could be justified. Title I was the original program, authorized under ESEA in 1965, to serve disadvantaged students. Because Congress deemed the unique needs of migrant were not being met by Title I, MEP was authorized as an amendment to ESEA in 1966 and became a subpart of Title I.

Migrant students under the amended law were to be served by Title I if services were available and appropriate. In fact, in 1990, fewer than 25 percent of migrant students were served by Title I.[34] Title I is primarily an urban program and MEP is primarily a rural program, which was a major reason for the low percentage of migrant students being served, but many migrant educators believe Title I generally ignored the needs of migrant students in schools where there were Title I programs.

Funding is another historical issue. Up until 1981, MEP was essentially an entitlement program from Title I funds. States received grants from aggregate Title I appropriations based on the FTEs of migrant students. Many Title I directors did not like this arrangement. The funding changed in 1981. Now each program receives a specific appropriation. Title I, from the latter years of the Bush Administration and up until the Congress of 1995-1996, received considerable increases in appropriations while MEP was essentially level-funded. The differences in the funding caused concern among migrant educators. Another possible resentment is migrant education state grants are dependent on annual recruitment, while Title I grants are fixed for ten years by the census data. Title I programs do not have to do anything special, such as the MEP recruitment process, to receive funds.

Title I is a much larger program than MEP. Title I receives over $6 billion dollars while MEP receives about 300 million dollars or about 5 percent of Title I appropriations. In northern urban states, where there are relatively few migrants as compared to urban poor families, MEP is often less than one percent of the funding of Title I.

With money goes political clout. Because Title I is bigger and an important part of city school district budgets, it has the support of all of the urban congressman and their mayors. There have only been a handful of members of Congress and a few state legislators who have had an interest in MEP. In large states, Title I is administered separately from MEP. Again, the greater political power within states resides with Title I.

If a state is submitting a consolidated plan for federal education services, the

bureaucratic power of the director of migrant education may not be sufficient to develop a plan, at the state level that truly meets the needs of migrant students. Because Title I is primarily administered by local districts, the state director of migrant education must also work with several districts and schools within those districts.

As schoolwide projects increase and more migrant students are involved in schoolwide projects, an adequate local plan is essential to ensure the needs of migrant students are met. Again, the adequacy of the plan may depend on the political clout of migrant education personnel at both the state and local level.

These factors make a marriage of Title I and MEP problematic. Many migrant educators are fearful of being swallowed-up by Title I. This fear is not so much the fear of personal professional survival, but rather that they, as a program, will not be able to ensure that migrant students receive appropriate services.

Migrant educators are particularly concerned that the unique needs of migrant students will not be met in schoolwide projects. They doubt that district personnel will understand the culture of migrant students and if they will have empathy toward the students.

Two specific problems have been raised by migrant educators: availability of services to formerly eligible migrant students and migrant parent involvement. A major change in IASA, for MEP, was to reduce the time to count migrant students for FTEs from six years to three years after the family's last move. The students who moved more than three years ago, may still have academic problems caused by their lifestyle circumstances, but no longer will they have specific advocates and programs designated for them. Migrant parent involvement in schoolwide projects could be difficult. Migrant educators have mastered the relationship between MEP, the school, and migrant parents. They have overcome the fears and reluctance of migrant parents to work equally with school authorities. In schoolwide projects, in many schools, migrant parents will be a small part of the group and will have to overcome the status of an outsider. Again, migrant educators are concerned there will be a lack of understanding for the uniqueness of the lifestyle of migratory families.

To ensure the relationship occurs between Title I and MEP that Congress intended, will take the active interest and leadership at the highest levels of state and local administrations. Chief state school officers must oversee the state consolidated plan process and local superintendents must oversee the schoolwide project plan process.

A more general problem is the procedures to obtain high standards and the assessment relating to the standards. For migratory students the questions is, whose standards? For an east coast student, are the standards to be achieved the standards of the home-based schools in Florida, or those in New Jersey and New York where the family works in the summer and fall? In the short-term, all states are not progressing at the same speed in developing standards and assessments which will cause problems for the migrant program when a student is in more than one state. High standards and assessing achievement is the core of IASA. State directors of migrant education have to grapple with all standard and assessment issues within their state and try to understand how other states are moving to fulfill the law's requirements. The complexity of the situation and the lack of political clout of migrant educators might mean that migrant students will not be treated equally as was the intent of Congress.

Opportunities for Migrant Students

The potential difficulties between MEP and Title I must be resolved because a closer working relationship will help migrant students. To achieve equity for migrant students, MEP must be integrated into state efforts of school reform, high standards and appropriate assessments. This is the only way migrant students will obtain the benefits of the total educational resources of schools and states. There are also political benefits in states where the Title I program is large, in comparison to MEP. The integration between the two programs will benefit MEP because it will provide more clout within the bureaucracies. A working partnership at the national level between Title I and MEP could also be beneficial. A union of this type could help MEP in its relationship with Congress and could help present a unified opinion to Congress during the next reauthorization of ESEA.

Opportunity for Title I Students

Title I students can also gain by a closer working relationship between the two programs. Title I directors should fully examine MEP to determine if replication of the programs is applicable to the Title I population and schoolwide projects. For example, MEP is a leader in involving parents. IASA has very explicit requirements for Title I in parental involvement and the experience of MEP in this vital area should be shared with Title I and regular school programs. All of the models of MEP that have been cited should be examined by Title I programs. Even though it may be difficult to provide programs, similar to MEP, for the larger and more heterogeneous Title I population, the fact is that MEP has successfully created the type of programs that are needed to obtain the equity for all students that is called for in IASA.

Challenges For The Future

Improving America's School Act

The most immediate challenge for MEP is to resolve all the issues and potential problems associated with Title I and IASA. Much of the progress that has been made over the last thirty years to create equity for migrant students could be lost if schoolwide projects do not have programs that meet the special needs of migrant students.

Anti-Immigrant Attitude

The cyclical history in the United States of nativist feeling was revived during the 1994 election. Congress has reflected this view with bills concerning welfare, immigration and the establishment of English as the official language. These bills are particularly directed toward both legal and illegal immigrants who are Hispanic. Considering that over 75 percent of migrant students are Hispanic, the impact of anti-immigrant feeling, and the specific provision of bills that become law will cause difficulty in creating equity opportunities for migrant students. Because many people, including members of Congress, have difficulty recognizing the difference between immigrant and migrant there is potential jeopardy for MEP and all migrant family service programs. To deflect the anti-immigrant feeling, some organizations are even changing their names by substituting "farmworker" for "migrant." The election of 1996, at all levels, where immigration is highly a visible issue, will set the tone of political feeling toward Hispanics for the immediate future. If the anti-immigrant attitude continues, public officials may not respond to the needs of migrant students which will hurt the students, families, employers, states and the nation.

Funding

The FTE counts of migrant eligible students has steadily increased from 437,000 in 1988 to 787,000 in 1994, an 80 percent increase. The funding for MEP has modestly increased from $269 million to $305 million over the same period for only a 13 percent increase. The RTI study predicated the number of migrant students would increase to 790,000 in 2000 from 597,000 in 1990*. As the recruitment process for migrant students continues, more migrant students will be identified each year. To adequately meet the needs of an increased number of students will take an increase in funding. There is also the inexorable pressure on all discretionary programs of balancing the federal budget by 2002. With few advocates in Congress and the possible continuation of anti-immigrant feeling, MEP is potentially

*FTEs and student counts are different.

exposed to extraordinary funding problems.

Coordination Issues

One of the MEPs purposes, as stipulated in IASA, is to "ensure that migratory children are provided with appropriate educational services (including supportive services) that address their needs in a coordinated and efficient manner.[35] The law further states that funds received by states, for migrant students, must be coordinated with similar programs and projects within the state and in other States, as well as with Federal programs that can benefit migratory children and their families.[36]

The notion of coordination serves many practical purposes. Coordination implies efficiency through the elimination of duplication and economies of scale. It often overcomes gaps in services due to different eligibility requirements of programs. To achieve coordination, Congress periodically suggests block grants to states with few strings attached. Therefore, coordination among migrant family programs will be received favorably by Congress. There are many practical problems in coordinating services for migrant families which should be analyzed at all levels of government.

At the request of the National Commission on Migrant Education, the Administrative Conference of the United States (ACUS), provided an excellent description of the coordination issues at the federal level. The four major federal programs serving migrant families, in three federal departments, have very little coordination other than on an ad-hoc basis. Migrant Health and Migrant Head Start are small programs in a very large department, Health and Human Services. JTPA is in another large department, the Department of Labor. Migrant Education is the largest of the four programs, with the most direct access to the highest levels of the Department of Education, but USED is a relatively small department.[37] To overcome the separation of these services and to develop broad policy goals to serve migrant families, ACUS recommended an interagency council should be established by an Executive Order. It was recommended that a major purpose of the interagency council should seek to narrow the various definitions of migrants so that meaningful statistical data could be developed. Accurate data will aid the development of good policy. ACUS argued that the interagency council would more readily attract the attention of cabinet secretaries, Congress and have more influence to promote coordination at the state level.[38]

How to achieve an Executive Order is a difficult political problem. The White House has to be made aware of the issues in order to take the lead in this effort. An Executive Order could be requested by the four migrant family programs and the secretaries of the respective departments, but this is unlikely to happen. A better

process would be to have a request made by Congress or by an advocacy organization. The best time to start this process is immediately after the last presidential election.

Coordinated services among the four major migrant programs will likely benefit migrant families. Health services delivered by Migrant Health (MH) are critical for migrant children. Migrant Head Start (MHS), overlaps the age eligibility of MEP because MHS serves children through age five and MEP serves children ages 3 through 5. Migrant JTPA programs provide valuable retrieval services for migrant students who have not graduated from high school.

Coordination at the state level is even more difficult than at the federal level. Of the four migrant programs, only MEP is administered by states. The other three programs are administered out of Washington through grantees who do not have to respond to a state. Many grantees are regional and cover several states. If a state director of migrant education wants to coordinate with Migrant Head Start or JTPA, the coordination can only be accomplished through good will and negotiations. Not even a governor could mandate the coordination.

The opportunity for coordination at the local level is more optimistic. Where there are relatively large numbers of migrant families and service providers have offices in the same geographic area, individual program directors can meet and develop plans for better coordination without the huge bureaucratic barriers of Washington or the lack of an administrative presence in the state capital. In 1993, the Urban Institute issued a report which detailed effective coordination in six local sites.[39] These models demonstrated the cliché, "where there is a will, there is a way." Congress and others should be made aware of the possibilities of coordination these models represent. They should also be made aware of the difficulties of coordination because of the previously cited problems of lack of uniform definitions and eligibilities for migrants. To bring these models' successes and difficulties to a high level of awareness is another argument to establish a federal interagency council as recommended by ACUS.

Employers

Related to issues of coordination of programs is the question of how to involve the employers of migrant families in helping to provide services. Employers benefit by healthy employees, child care programs for their employees' children and quality education programs for migrant students so that the youth are productively involved in the community. Where there are quality programs, migrant families return each year to provide a stable labor force for the employers. Enlightened employers

understand the benefits to their business of these programs. More employers need to made aware of these benefits. The Urban Institute suggests that incentives might encourage more employers to participate.[40] Employers present a large untapped resource for services to migrant families. A proper relationship between employers and providers can help the employer, help MEP, and most importantly, help the migrant families. The effort to involve employers is one which needs national advocates. This is another area in which a federal interagency council could be involved.

State Governments

In a manner similar to private employers, state governments should be made more aware of the needs of migrant families and how their well-being can enhance the state's agricultural economy. State health and mental services, job training and pre-school programs should understand the needs of migrant families, what the targeted federal migrant family support programs accomplish and also the fact the programs cannot meet all the existing needs. Migrant program directors need to work with private sector employers so that the employers will involve state legislators and state agencies to fill gaps in services.

Advocates

Because MEP is such a small program and the migrant population does not have much political influence, it is necessary to develop outside advocates to meet all the future challenges facing MEP. There is also the need for a facilitation function to bring key policy makers together to resolve the issues of coordination. The Interstate Migrant Education Council (IMEC) has been an advocacy organization since 1983. Currently there are sixteen states who are members of IMEC representing approximately sixty percent of the migrant student population. IMEC members are appointed by chief state school officers from the respective states, and, among others, include state directors of migrant education, federal and state legislators and state school board members. IMEC has the ability, on a limited basis, of providing both an awareness and a facilitation function to address these future challenges.

A current IMEC project which seeks to develop awareness of major issues for migrant education is the sponsorship of a National Forum - Migrant Children And Youth: Challenges Of Sharing Responsibility In A New Era , held in January, 1997. The forum considered a variety of issues, some of which are discussed in this paper, and focussed on the needs of coordination at the federal and state level, and the involvement of private sector employers.

Because IMEC has limited resources, it will have difficulty following-up on all of the recommendations of the Forum. IMEC is best suited to work on recommendations related to the federal government. To fully implement the other recommendations will require organizations with an ability on a regional and state by state basis to bring policy makers together over a period of time. The logical organizations to accomplish this facilitation are the Federal Education Laboratories in a consortium arrangement. Through the Laboratories, the parties could be brought together to understand the issues and recommendations. After a level of understanding has been reached, specific strategies could be developed and commitments could be secured to pursue the strategies. Follow up meetings would be needed to evaluate progress.

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The need for MEP will continue for the foreseeable future because the number of migrants will increase and the mix of migrant workers will change. The program's fundamental purpose has been to create opportunities for educational equity for this unique population. MEP has had extraordinary accomplishments, but it faces extraordinary challenges. To meet the challenges, there must be an understanding of the issues and a commitment to action by public officials and employers of migrant workers.

Footnotes

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7."Hired Farmworkers, Health and Well-Being at Risk" (Washington, D.C., United States General Accounting Office, 1992) p. 3

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11.U.S. Department of Education, Office of Migrant Education, (January 31, 1996)

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13.Cox, et al., p. 12

14.Invisible Children, p.15

15.Cox, et al., p. 23

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Biography

John D. Perry is executive director of the Interstate Migrant Education Council. He is also a member of the National Advisory Council on Migrant Health. Mr. Perry was a New York state senator from 1975 to 1992. He served on New York state's Job Training Partnership Council from 1983 to 1994. Prior to being a state senator, Mr. Perry taught economics in high school and college. He holds a B.S. in economics from Syracuse University, an M.A. in education from Syracuse University and an M.S.T. in economics from the University of Missouri.

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